

# Creating Off Leash Dog Parks A Step – By – Step Guide



City of Atlanta  
Honorable Shirley Franklin  
Mayor

Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs  
Dianne Harnell Cohen  
Commissioner

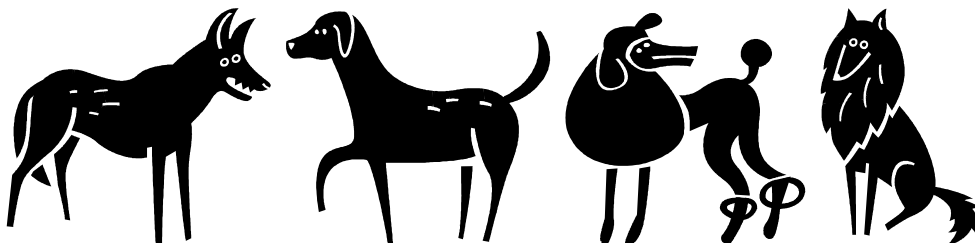
## INTRODUCTION



City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances, Section 110-70 (a), requires dogs to be on leashes in public areas for the protection of fellow residents, as well as the dogs themselves. To offer the numerous dogs in the city space to roam freely, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA) has created guidelines to support the creation of Off Leash Dog Parks (OLDP); to specifically provide safe places for dogs to exercise, play and socialize legally “off leash”.

Creating Off Leash Dog Parks is an Atlanta grass-roots operation. If a group of dog owners decides an area is needed in their community, they should organize themselves as an official group with at least five members. They should also register with the Civic Association and Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) in the given area.

In this booklet, the process of bringing a proposal to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural affairs is defined in detail.





## **STEP ONE**

### **Defining a space for an Off Leash Dog Park (OLDP)**

There are certain factors in identifying and defining a site for a proposed OLDP. Look for areas that include the following:

- Under utilized sections of existing parks or play lots that will not interfere with park aesthetics or existing uses.
- Linear parks/easements to section off for off-leash dog use.
- In identifying a site for an OLDP, there are also certain criteria that must be considered:
- The area must be a minimum of two acres.
- Sites should be divided into areas for large dogs and smaller dogs.
- Site must be accessible for all park users.
- Water line accessibility is necessary for area maintenance and a “doggie” drinking fountain.
- Varying topography, both shaded and open areas, which is most desirable for animals.

The site must be configured to allow for fencing along the entire perimeter with a double gate system for dogs and park users and another gate to allow for maintenance truck access.



## STEP TWO

### Conducting Surveys

After an appropriate site is selected for a proposed OLDP, three types of surveys should be conducted within a one-year period:

**Petition:** A petition of support should be distributed to the surrounding area of the proposed site. It is important to include the signatures of both dog-owners and non-dog owners. See Appendix' 1-A and 1-B

**Usage Surveys:** Usage surveys of the proposed area should be conducted for a period of six months to one year. This will allow for a minimum of two seasons to be surveyed. These surveys determine the existing use of the proposed OLDP site, identifies who currently uses the site, what types of activities they are participating in, which days and hours the park is heavily used, weather conditions, other amenities around the site such as a play lot or athletic field, and if the person observed is a dog owner or not. See Appendix 1-C

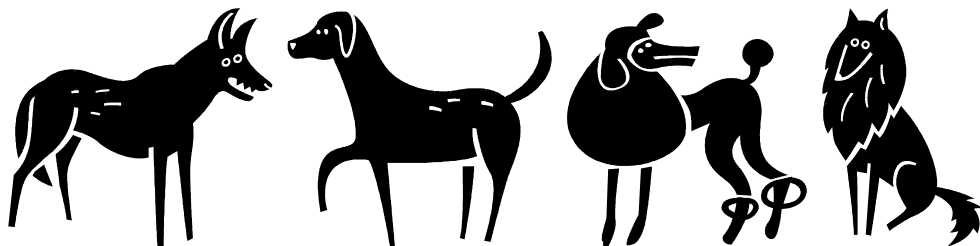
**Site Survey:** Once the petition and usage surveys have been conducted, a site survey of the proposed area should be drafted. This survey identifies the dog owner group's desired specifications of the proposed OLDP such as the division between small and large dog areas, infrastructure, utilities, security, signage, landscaping details, amenities for dogs and users, etc. See Appendix 1-D



### **STEP THREE**

#### **Involving the Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs**

- After all the surveys are completed and the NPU approves the proposed OLDP, a written proposal, including a capital budget and an operating budget with all supporting documentation should be submitted to the DPRCA.
- This proposal should have a letter of support from the NPU.
- Upon the approval of a proposed OLDP, the DPRCA will review design possibilities, which will be presented at the NPU meeting for review and agreement. The DPRCA will identify exactly which costs the community will be responsible for.
- The proposal will go to City Council for approval.





## STEP FOUR

### Community Responsibilities\*

The most important aspect of having a successful OLDP in a city park is ongoing community support and communication with the DPRCA. There are certain responsibilities a community must adhere to. This includes:

**Maintenance:** The community must maintain the area. It is the responsibility of the users of the OLDP to clean up after their pets, rotate, and replace any pea gravel areas, wash down the hard surfaced area regularly and daily clean up of any waste that users may have missed. The rules and regulations must be posted at all times, and regular users of the area should inform new users of the rules and regulations as well as the importance of maintenance. The dog owner group should provide DPRCA with a monthly cleaning schedule and will have to sign a letter of agreement for their upkeep of the OLDP.

**Monitoring:** The community or users of the OLDP should assist in the monitoring of the site. The dog owner group members should encourage the enforcement of the leash laws outside the site, monitor the behavior of the dogs and dog owners using the OLDP and assist in the education of new users.

**Management:** The community or users of the OLDP must have frequent communication with the DPRCA regarding the management of the OLDP. If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the OLDP, then the DPRCA should be informed immediately and involved in the resolution.

**Fundraising:** The community or users of the OLDP must organize fundraising campaigns to finance on-going operations and new projects for the OLDP such as doggie drinking fountains, kiosks, isolation area or an agility area.

**Clean-Ups:** The community or users of the OLDP must hold semi-annual “entire” park clean-ups in conjunction with Conservancies, Friend of the Parks, Earth Day and Clean & Green celebrations.

**\*Failure to provide this type of support, both operational and financial, may result in the DPRCA reconverting the parkland to its original use.**

## **RULES AND REGULATIONS**

- (1) All users of the off-leash area shall assume all risk and liability associated with such an area.
- (2) Owners are responsible for the action of their dogs. Each dog must be kept within sight of her/his owner and under voice control.
- (3) Dog owners have responsibility for watching their dog's behavior. If a dog displays aggressive behavior or fights, the owner shall be responsible for immediately controlling or removing the dog from the off-leash area.
- (4) No more than three dogs per owner shall be allowed in the area at one time.
- (5) All dogs must wear a collar and ID tag.
- (6) All dogs must be properly licensed, healthy, and have current vaccinations.
- (7) No puppies under 16 weeks are allowed.
- (8) No dogs in heat are allowed.
- (9) No dogs are permitted to enter with pronged collars.
- (10) Any dog that barks continually must be removed or muzzled by her/his owner.
- (11) Owners must clean up after their dogs.
- (12) The off-leash areas have double gated entrances. Owners must close and latch both gates after entering or exiting the area.
- (13) No children under the age of 12 are allowed in the area without close adult supervision.
- (14) The only food of any kind allowed is bite-size dog treats.
- (15) Do not feed dogs without the owner's permission.
- (16) Bicycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, jogging or strollers are not allowed.
- (17) Dogs are not permitted on benches.
- (18) The off-leash area may be closed in times of bad weather or for maintenance.
- (19) Serious problems resulting in injury must be reported immediately to the Office of Parks.
- (20) All the rules shall be posted on a sign at each entrance to the off leash area. In the event that the rules are not posted, users of the area shall still be held responsible for knowing and following the rules, and may be fined or otherwise penalized for failure to abide by such rules.

**APPENDIX 1-A  
SAMPLE**

**CITY OF ATLANTA DOG PARK PETITION OF SUPPORT**

This petition, supported by the undersigned constituents, is directed to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. Its goal is to support the designation and construction of an enclosed dog park at \_\_\_\_\_ Park with the specific location at \_\_\_\_\_

We, the undersigned constituents of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of neighborhood and/or association) respectfully urge you to authorize the creation of to an "off-leash" dog park to be created at the location described above.

In creating a dog park, we hope to accomplish the following goals (The below goals are only an example to be used as a guide):

1. To establish a fenced in, off-leash dog park where well-behaved canine can exercise in a clean, safe environment without endangering people, property, or wildlife.
2. To develop a beautiful, well-maintained space, open to all dog lovers and friends who are willing to uphold the park's rules and restrictions.
3. To view this park as a community project, in partnership with the City of Atlanta, designed to satisfy the needs of dog-owners and non-dog owners alike.

We request the City of Atlanta to approve this petition

\_\_\_\_\_(provide description) The design of the park will  
include \_\_\_\_\_ (provide description)



**APPENDIX 1-B  
SAMPLE**

**CITY OF ATLANTA OFF LEASH DOG PARK PETITION**

Please sign below to show your support of a public dog park in Atlanta

NAME/ADDRESS	DOG OWNER? YES OR NO	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			
17.			
18.			
19.			
20.			
21.			

For more information please call \_\_\_\_\_ or email \_\_\_\_\_.

**APPENDIX 1-C**  
**Sample**

**City of Atlanta Parks Usage Survey**

*Please mail your completed forms to the City of Atlanta Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs, 675 Ponce De Leon, Ave., N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Atlanta, Georgia 30308, Attn. Dianne Harnell Cohen, Commissioner*

**OBSERVATIONS & CONDITIONS:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Day: \_\_\_\_\_AM / PM

Day of Week:               SUN  MON  TUE  WED THU  FRI  SAT

Weather Conditions: (circle all that apply)

sunny  cloudy  partly cloudy  rainy  snowy  windy  other:\_\_\_\_\_

Temperature: < 32F      33F - 55F      56F - 70F      71F - 85F      > 86F

Number of Individuals Observed:

Activities:

Comments:

**OBSERVATIONS & CONDITIONS:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Day: \_\_\_\_\_AM / PM

Day of Week:               SUN  MON  TUE  WED THU  FRI  SAT

Weather Conditions: (circle all that apply)

sunny  cloudy  partly cloudy  rainy  snowy  windy  other:\_\_\_\_\_

Temperature: < 32F      33F - 55F      56F - 70F      71F - 85F      > 86F

Number of Individuals Observed:

Activities:

Comments:

**VOLUNTEER'S INFORMATION:**

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Phone:\_\_\_\_\_

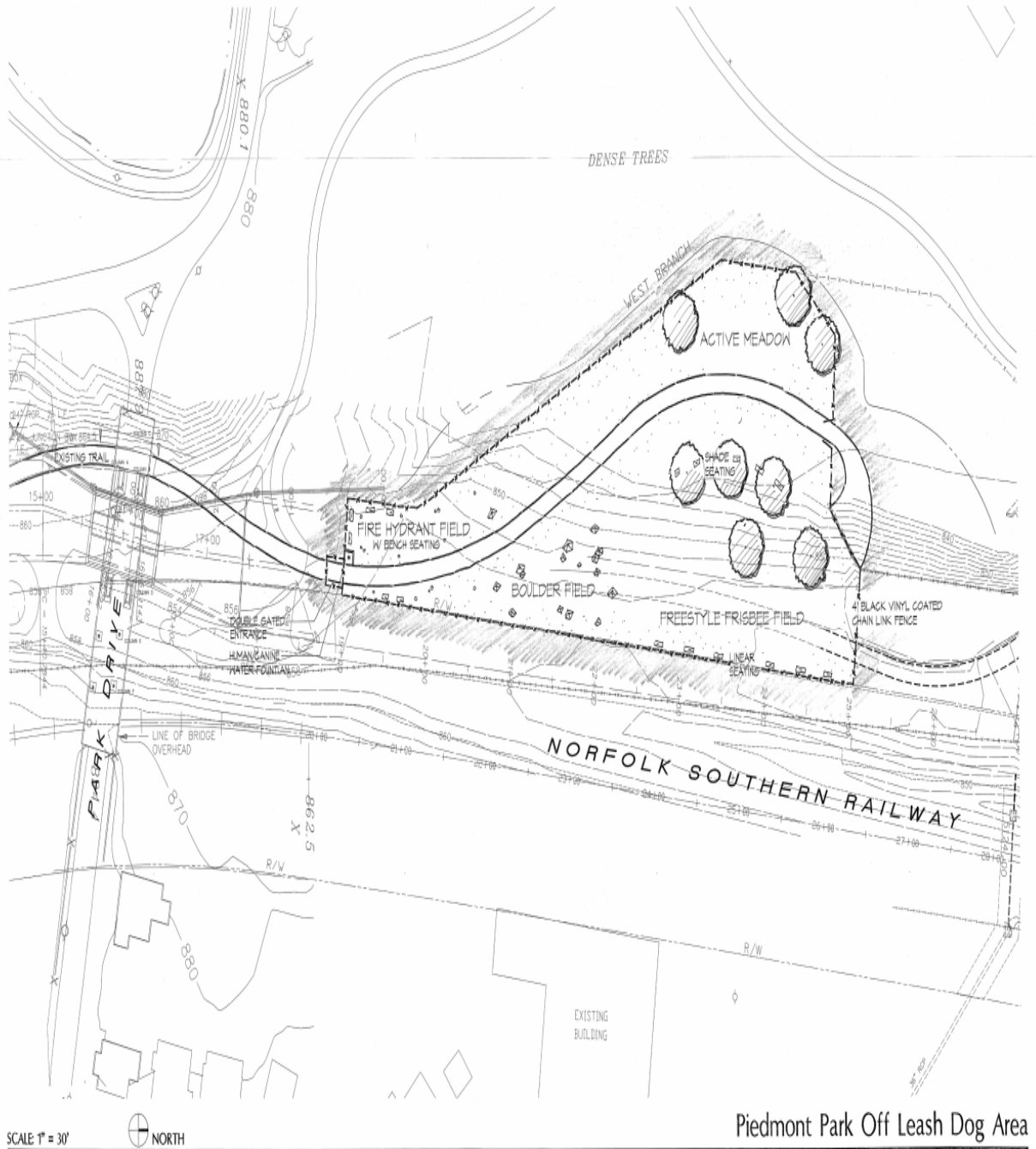
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Atlanta, Georgia \_\_\_\_\_zip code

Email:\_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX 1-D SAMPLE

## SITE SURVEY



SCALE 1" = 30'



Piedmont Park Off Leash Dog Area

August 29, 2001



## City of Atlanta

***Honorable Shirley Franklin***  
***Mayor***

Atlanta City Council  
***Honorable Lisa Borders, President***

Honorable Carla Smith, District 1  
Honorable Kwanza Hall, District 2  
Honorable Ivory Lee Young, Jr. District 3  
Honorable Cleta Winslow, District 4  
Honorable Natalyn Mosby Archibong, District 5  
Honorable Anne Fauver, District 6  
Honorable Howard Shook, District 7  
Honorable Clair Muller, District 8  
Honorable Felicia A. Moore, District 9  
Honorable C.T. Martin, District 10  
Honorable Jim Maddox, District 11  
Honorable Joyce Sheperd, District 12  
Honorable Ceasar C. Mitchell, Post 1  
Honorable Mary Norwood, Post 2  
Honorable H. Lamar Willis, Post 3

**Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs**  
675 Ponce De Leon, Ave., N.E. Suite 800  
Atlanta, Georgia 30308  
404.817.6788

**Dianne Harnell Cohen, Commissioner**

**Office of Parks**  
**Jay Lowery, Director**

For more information about the services and programs of the  
City of Atlanta, watch City Channel 26 or visit us online at [www.atlantaga.gov](http://www.atlantaga.gov).